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ABSTRACT

The federal Cooperative Extension Service (CES) began more than 80 years ago as a way to disseminate agricultural research and information through land-grant universities. Today, extension education is evolving to meet the demands of diversity, technology, and new ways of working and learning. Diversity is one of the core values of the CES's strategic plan for the 21st century, and many extension educators are focusing on serving diverse audiences with expanded programming and recruiting, and hiring diverse staff. Nevertheless, urban residents, youth, and low income groups remain least likely to be aware of or use extension services. Technology as a delivery method and access to technology for critical information needs are key issues affecting society. Extension educators have recognized the value of distance delivery of educational programming, and they are exploring new ways to make extension a participatory learning organization and to provide leadership for the development of learning communities. By responding to the contemporary issues of diversity, technology, and community building, extension can enhance the relevance of its traditional focus on quality of life and critical issues affecting daily living. (An annotated bibliography contains 18 references.) (MN)

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Extension Today and Tomorrow
Trends and Issues Alerts

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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS
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Extension Today and Tomorrow

The federal Cooperative Extension Service (CES) began more than 80 years ago as a way to disseminate agricultural research and information through the land-grant universities. Focused then as now on community-based learning "to improve economic, environmental, and social conditions" ("About CSREES" 1998 <http://www.reeusda.gov/new/about/csreesa2.htm>), in the public mind extension remains most strongly associated with agriculture and the 4-H program (Warner et al. 1996). However, extension today is evolving to meet the demands of diversity, technology, and new ways of working and learning. This *Alert* highlights extension's responses to societal trends and provides an annotated list of resources.

New People and New Institutions

Diversity is one of the core values in "Framing the Future," CES's strategic plan for the 21st century (White and Burnham 1995). However, "the existing diverse groups in America have varying values, customs, needs, and challenges that may differ from those of the traditional audiences served by Cooperative Extension" (Ingram and Nyangara 1997, p. 21). Many extension educators are focusing on serving diverse audiences with expanded programming and recruiting and hiring diverse staff (Grogan and Eshelman 1998; Ingram and Nyangara 1997). Others are attempting to internationalize programs by incorporating diverse perspectives and aligning their mission with international issues (Ludwig and Barrick 1995). But despite increased attention to underserved audiences, Warner et al. (1996) found that urban residents, youth, and low income groups remain least likely to be aware of or use extension services. Extension educators are challenged to develop a vision of multiculturalism, improve their cross-cultural communication skills, involve a broader spectrum of community stakeholders, provide more inclusive information, and expand beyond the traditional boundaries of university research (Cano and Ludwig 1995; Rivera 1997; Warner et al. 1998).

New Delivery Methods

Technology as a delivery method and access to technology for critical information needs are key issues affecting society. Extension educators have recognized the value of distance delivery of educational programming, especially for rural populations (Shrestha and Sutphin 1996), and are leaping onto the Internet to explore innovative electronic delivery. Extension can play a key role in facilitating access for underserved communities as part of its community outreach mission (Tennessen et al. 1997). The Web is the latest manifestation of a move from an educational dissemination model to a model of access based on customer-driven needs (White and Burnham 1995). In line with this trend, the *Journal of Extension*, CES's official publication, has been available only via the Web and e-mail since 1994 <http://www.joe.org>. Research by Richardson et al. (1997) and Siegrist et al. (1998) suggests that, among both traditional and nontraditional extension audiences, the preference for electronic delivery techniques is likely to continue increasing.

New Ways of Working and Learning

Extension educators are exploring ways to make extension a participatory learning organization and to provide leadership for the development of learning communities, two growing trends at the end of the century (Earnest et al. 1995; Warner et al. 1998; White and Burnham 1995). Although societal models are changing from teacher to learner centered and from a focus on institutional to community needs (White and Burnham 1995), Patterson (1998) argues that many of extension's management practices are based on century-old workplace assumptions. He urges extension leaders to embrace a "new paradigm" of managing systems, not people, and to craft a community vision. Extension can enhance the relevance of its traditional focus on quality of life and critical issues affecting daily living through its responses to the contemporary issues of diversity, technology, and community building.

Resources

Cano, J., and Ludwig, B. "Perceptions, Responses, and Knowledge about Diversity Held by Extension Administrators." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 36, no. 3 (1995): 64-71. (EJ 511 237)

According to survey responses, extension administrators acknowledge diversity as an important issue but are confused about how to communicate with and serve diverse populations. They lack a clear vision of a multicultural organization and need to recruit diverse applicants.

Grogan, S., and Eshelman, B. "Staffing Strategies for a More Diverse Workforce: Case Examples from Cornell Cooperative Extension." *Journal of Extension* 36, no. 1 (February 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998february/a1.txt>

In the process of recruiting staff from diverse backgrounds, Cornell Cooperative Extension is creating new rules to become more inclusive. Retaining staff from diverse backgrounds needs to be as high a priority as recruiting them. Preparing the workplace to support staff from diverse backgrounds requires greater attention. Changing organizational behavior is the first step in creating a workplace that supports diversity and pluralism.

Earnest, G. W.; Ellsworth, D.; Nieto, R. D.; McCaslin, N. L.; and Lackman, L. ***Developing Community Leaders: An Impact Assessment of Ohio's Community Leadership Programs.*** Columbus: Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University, 1995. (ED 338 808)

An extension community leadership program increased participants' skills in challenging the status quo, inspiring vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.

Ingram, P. D., and Nyangara, F. M. "Recruitment, Retention, and Participation of Underrepresented Groups on Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Advisory Boards and Committees." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 38, no. 4 (1997): 21-29. (EJ 554 961)

A survey of 67 Pennsylvania extension professionals and onsite reviews found minority representation on extension boards and committees ranged from 17-50%. Recruitment and retention problems included time constraints, lack of familiarity, transportation problems, and discomfort.

Ludwig, B. G., and Barrick, R. K. "Internationalization of Extension: What Does It Mean?" *Journal of Agricultural Education* 37, no. 2 (1996): 40-46. (EJ 525 571)

A Delphi panel identified critical elements of an internationalized extension system: (1) understanding of global and national interdependence; (2) emphasis on the impact of international forces on agriculture; (3) international perspectives in ongoing activities; (4) extension agents' awareness of the relationship between international issues and extension mission; and (5) personnel evaluation that recognizes international efforts.

Maddy, D. J., and Kealy, L. J. M. "Integrating a Marketing Mindset: Building Extension's Future in the Information Marketplace." *Journal of Extension* 36, no. 4 (August 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998august/comm1.txt>

Can Cooperative Extension capture the attention of consumers bombarded with marketing messages developed through seven-figure advertising campaigns? Strategic marketing can make Cooperative Extension a household brand name associated with quality and accessible educational programming that helps people put knowledge to work.

Patterson, T. F., Jr. "A New Paradigm for Extension Administration." *Journal of Extension* 36, no. 1 (February 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998february/comm1.txt>

Having rejected the classical school of management, this commentary proposes a paradigm based on fresh assumptions about the nature of employees and the workplace. New extension administrative practice is suggested, based on these assumptions.

Peterson, M. ***Harnessing the Power of Vision. Ten Steps to Creating a Strategic Vision and Action Plan for Your Community. Preparing Your Community for the 21st Century Series***. Little Rock: Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, 1995. (ED 383 824)

Contains insights and tools to help community members develop a strategic vision and action plan. Illustrates a 10-step community development process, focusing on the strategic visioning component.

Rewerts, M. A., and Timm, K. "Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Creates a Blueprint for Change." ***Journal of Extension*** 34, no. 2 (April 1996). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1996april/comm1.txt>

The primary goal of Colorado State University Cooperative Extension is to help citizens use the knowledge emerging from the research conducted at land-grant universities. Cooperative Extension educators play an important role as change agents who help people identify solutions to critical local issues that often focus attention on the interdependence that exists among rural and urban communities.

Richardson, J. G.; Clement, D. M.; and Mustian, R. D. "Reaching Traditional and Nontraditional Extension Audiences." ***Journal of Applied Communications*** 81, no. 3 (1997): 13-23. (EJ 553 287)

A survey revealed diverse preferences for delivery of extension education and information among extension audiences. A distinct preference for electronic communications was likely to increase.

Rivera, W. M. "Agricultural Extension into the Next Decade." ***European Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*** 4, no. 1 (June 1997): 29-38. (EJ 546 904)

Discusses three worldwide policy trends—privatization, revitalization, and decentralization—and their impact on economic development and extension education.

Sampson, S. A. "Technological Issues for Improving Access to Internet Web Sites for Rural Users." ***Journal of Extension*** 36, no. 4 (August 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998august/tt2.txt>

Website developers can improve accessibility to their sites by rural clients through awareness of technological challenges encountered by their potential market. Some rural users face problems with reliability of telephone services and dated computer technology. These technological issues can have an impact on the effective use of the Web as a mechanism for data and information delivery.

Shrestha, G. M., and Sutphin, H. D. "Program Delivery via Satellite in the Information Age: Extension Educators' Perspectives on Teaching Techniques, Communication Channels, and Participation." ***Journal of Educational Technology Systems*** 24, no. 2 (1996): 135-144. (EJ 520 265)

Describes program delivery through the Cornell Cooperative Extension Satellite Network as a new educational initiative in the information age. Results of a questionnaire survey sent to 375 educators are discussed, including effectiveness of teaching techniques and communication channels and factors that encourage and discourage participation.

Siegrist, H.; Labarge, G.; and Prochaska, S. "Using Electronic Media to Convey Timely Information." ***Journal of Extension*** 36, no. 5 (October 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998october/iw1.txt>

Ohio State University Extension specialists and agents use e-mail and fax services to convey information to crop consultants, farmers, and agronomy service personnel. Survey results confirm that this educational delivery is popular among industry personnel and farmers alike. Participants appreciate the timeliness of information provided electronically.

Tennessen, D. J.; PonTell, S.; Romine, V.; and Motheral, S. W. "Opportunities for Cooperative Extension and Local Communities in the Information Age." ***Journal of Extension*** 35, no. 5 (October 1997). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1997october/comm1.txt>

Access to the Internet by some communities can be inhibited by lack of economic and human resources. Cooperative Extension can play a role in enabling communities to access the Internet by seeking alliances among local individuals, industry, and institutions to employ the Internet as an educational and work medium.

Warner, M. E.; Hinrichs, C.; Schneyer, J.; and Joyce, L. "From Knowledge Extended to Knowledge Created: Challenges for a New Extension Paradigm." ***Journal of Extension*** 36, no. 4 (August 1998). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998august/rb1.txt>

The practice of extension has been described as "knowledge applied" or "knowledge extended." The research community has begun to recognize extension's role in creating knowledge. This movement recognizes extension's capacity to participate as a full partner in the research process.

Warner, P. D.; Christenson, J. A.; Dillman, D. A.; and Salant, P. "Public Perception of Extension." ***Journal of Extension*** 34, no. 4 (August 1996). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1996august/a1.txt>

Telephone surveys of the U.S. population in 1982 and 1995 asked about the awareness and use of extension. Awareness of extension has remained high, although buoyed by 4-H's high visibility. Annual use of extension registered a decline.

White, B. A., and Burnham, B. "The Cooperative Extension System: A Facilitator of Access for Community-Based Education." In ***Public Libraries and Community-Based Education: Making the Connection for Lifelong Learning. Vol. 2: Commissioned Papers***. Washington, DC: National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 1995. (ED 385 260)

Describes the Cooperative Extension System as a national model of collaboration in nonformal, lifelong learning. Presents its strategic planning effort, "Framing the Future," and addresses issues of connectivity and access.

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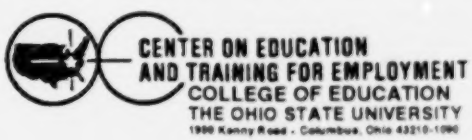
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